



NTFP-EP

Leaf Litter

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*Leaves and fruit of a tree
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The implications of the FC (Amendment) Act 2023

..... and where they create a desert, they call it peace.

Tacitus (quoting Calgacus)

The Forest Conservation (Amendment) Act 2023 is now real, and the months of wishful thinking that at least some aspects of the proposed Bill would be changed, is over. In this new situation, about 27% of India's forests, which are outside the Recorded Forest Area, will lose the protection of the erstwhile Forest Conservation Act (1980). That means that 1,97,159 sq kms of forests can, legitimately, be opened up for any non-forest activity. In the latest Forest Survey of India (2023) report, however, this 27% is also included to show that India's forest cover is now 21.71% of the total geographical area of the country, though there are questions about whether it is all forest cover or includes plantations ('green cover').

National security, internal security and India's commitments to net zero are stated as the main reasons for the Amendment. The idea is to *maintain or enhance the forest carbon stocks through ecologically balanced sustainable development*. Forest diversions are permitted within 100 kms of international borders, along roads and railway lines, and in Left Wing Extremism regions. Though many states in India have international borders, the region most vulnerable to forest diversions is the north east.

The north eastern states¹ constitute 7.7% of India's geographical area, and is home to 50% of the total flora, with 8000 species. Of these, 2526 are endemic to the region. Again, of the 1500 endangered species of flowering plants recorded in India, about 800 belong to the north east. Many of these species are of economic and customary importance to the indigenous and other forest peoples of the region. Along with the Western Ghats, the north east is one of the biodiverse 'hotspots' in the world. Alongside the rich floral and faunal diversity the region has a multitude of ethnicities, food ways, languages and ways of life. Unfortunately, over the last decades there has been a continuous simmer of unrest in many parts of the north east, the situation boiling over periodically, as in Manipur today. It is hoped that despite getting the legitimacy to divert forests in this region – especially for palm oil plantations and security-related infrastructure – the state would restrain itself from doing so.

The Amendment also exempts certain other activities within the notified forests. These include agro-forestry plantations, zoos and safari parks, eco-tourism and surveys, and prospecting. Though at the outset these interventions look benign they are detrimental to conservation. All of them require land and infrastructure, will expand, bring in 'privatization' in adivasi lands, and commercialize adivasi hospitality and culture. Over time, such activities and projects are bound to create gaps in the forest contiguity, fragmenting the corridors for animal movement, adding to the growing human-animal conflicts.

For the moment, the Amendment should not affect the forests claimed by local communities under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), as the FRA allows for claims of *deemed*

1 https://ijirt.org/master/publishedpaper/IJIRT153036_PAPER.pdf

forests, also outside Recorded Forest Areas, by the people. The Amendment has not over-ruled that aspect of the FRA. The implementation of the FRA in it's intended spirit, and the conservation and management of the many community protected forests across the country, including sacred groves, may be the anser to India's ambition of having 33% of it's geographical area under forest cover. A kind of 'patchwork conservation' which will have the advantage of community protection and inclusion, avoiding the conflicts inherent in big-area conservation based on exclusion. Much of these patches would necesarily be in non-notified areas, and can succumb to the Amendment, or to another Amendment that can over-rule the provisions of the FRA as it stands.

It is indeed unusual that the state finds reasons to weaken the conservation laws – promoting diversions, plantations, entertainment – instead of strengthening the existing legislation, and including peoples participation. The Amendment has left most conservationists shocked. And curiously, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, that should be concerned about the situation of the indigenous peoples who inhabit India's forests, has been silent on the matter.

Madhu Ramnath

Meeting a Telenga in an Assam tea town: memories of a migration

Dixita Deka

During a trip to the Assam Agricultural University (AAU) in Assam's Jorhat district, I met Gojen, just by chance. He was the attendant at the university guest house. The agricultural scientist whom I was to interview had asked Gojen to show me the way to the Horticulture Department. I went to Jorhat to meet a few people, academics and activists, working around issues of agriculture and food. Gojen came to accompany me from the university guest house where I stayed. He did not seem to be an Assamese by descent. I felt he was a native Hindi speaker. But his Assamese was fluent. When I asked him his name, he replied, 'Gojen Madrasi Telenga.' I was taken aback as I did not anticipate his South Indian roots. He was 54 years old when I met him.

Being born and brought up in Assam, I heard and read of the migration of people from other Indian states into the tea gardens of Assam for labour, facilitated by the British. Meeting Gojen was my first encounter with anyone sharing that history of migration from South India. When I met Gojen again during the same trip, I expressed my interest in knowing about his ancestors, who they were, and about their migration into Assam to work on the tea gardens. Gojen reciprocated positively. In 1913, Gojen's paternal grandfather, Latim Telenga, migrated to Jorhat from Madras (now Chennai) as a tea-garden labourer. As he was 'good' at cooking, a British Judge recruited him as his personal cook. Gojen said, 'Around 150-300 people from places like Orissa, Karnataka and Madras, were brought by the British to work on the tea gardens.' Currently, Gojen's family, along with his grandchildren, stay in Assam. I asked him if I could talk to him about his family, and if it was possible to meet other people from his community. He offered to accompany me to the nearby tea plantations where some of his relatives stayed. Unfortunately, that visit could not materialize that time. Instead, we met over lunch at the guest house.

Remembering his mother, Gojen recalled how young his mother was when the British left India and the country attained independence. She remembered that the British had thrown sweets and silver coins when they left the town. However, it was also a very difficult time under the British rule. She would tell young Gojen, 'If you happen to cross by a British man on the road, you need to stop by and bow your head.' He remembered his mother telling him that the British would bury silver coins around the tea plants. They would spread the rumour that, '*patta torega toh paisa milega*' (if you pluck the tea leaves, you would get money).

As Gojen thought about the old days, he expressed gratitude to the British who had offered plots of land to a lot of people from his community in the tea gardens. However, most of these labourers, as Gojen remembered, were addicted to alcohol and wanted quick money. As a result, the Hindu upper caste Assamese people could lure them off their land at a cheaper price. Gojen shared that most of the elders from his community who had migrated into Assam back then were no longer alive. Those who were had grown old, with faded memories. These histories of migration and exploitation in the tea gardens continue to be alive in the oral histories of the community.

Gojen fondly and frequently remembered his mother in between our conversation. 'She used to pluck tea leaves, and had died at the age of 106 years,' Gojen shared with a sense of pride. His father-in-law was a supervisor in the tea garden and his mother-in-law used to pluck tea leaves for living. It was in the tea garden that his mother and mother-in-law became friends. Later, Gojen's marriage was arranged out of that friendship.



*Women going to work in the tea garden,
Upper Assam*



Plucking tea in Upper Assam

Gojen had three daughters and a son. His daughters had all finished their higher

secondary education. His son was an Arts graduate from Jorhat College. They studied in Assamese medium schools and finished their education. His daughters were married off, two of them to Assamese boys and one of them into his own *jati* (i.e. from the Telugu community). He also had two grandchildren. He said they (including him) could not read, write or speak in Telugu as they were born and brought up in Assam. Two of his daughters worked at the hostel in AAU, and the other one was in charge of the security in the university campus.

Despite their ancestral roots, Gojen's family did not have any relatives in Chennai. But every time his wife went to Chennai with her sister, she came back with recipes for new South Indian delicacies. Otherwise, Gojen recalls his wife cooking all sort of Assamese dishes for him at home. He said they follow Hindu deities and celebrate Kali puja and Shiv puja. During Bihu, they follow the same rituals like those of the Assamese. He said that many of the families who shared the same migration history like his family, had started following the teachings of Srimanta Sankardeva and Neo-Vaishnavism.

Gojen was born in the AAU campus which he recalled to have housed the sugarcane cultivation earlier. After the British left, Gojen's father worked there as a Grade III sugarcane farm mechanic. They were six siblings. Four sisters and two brothers. Gojen was the youngest. The Farm Manager at the sugarcane farm named his older brother Gokul and told his father that if he would ever have another son, he must name him Gojen. That's how he got an Assamese name, he said. He joined AAU in 1986 and will retire in 2028. That's what he shared, that he was working at AAU before I was even born and he was there when most of the current faculty members were young students. In between, he bore witness to the changing farming landscape in Upper Assam giving way to the flourishing tea gardens. This provokes one to think deeply about the historical events and political agendas in Assam which probably had shaped the fields and farms in the region.

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The story of villages in the Hadgarh reservoir area

Anand Charan Sethy

The Salandi is a tributary of the river Baitarani, the main life line of Keonjhar district. After Independence, the government of Odisha constructed a reservoir on the Salandi river at Hadgarh to improve irrigation and enhance livelihood opportunities. The construction work of the reservoir began in 1960 & was completed in 1978. There were protests by the people but not very organized. As an experiment, the government first filled the reservoir in 1972. The first waters brought many fears among the villagers and a chaotic situation prevailed among the local people. The government officials and those who oversaw the reservoir construction did not have answers to the peoples' distressed questions. The affected people did not know what to do, whether to leave their homes or not. The lands were their only asset and the forest and its natural resources their additional incomes. The villages had not been rehabilitated when the water submerged their lands.

A geographical perspective

The Hadgarh reservoir is surrounded by two tribal dominated districts, Keonjhar & Mayurbhanj, where the forest coverage is more than in other districts of Odisha. A total of 16 villages were affected by the construction of the reservoir. Of the 16 villages, 12 are in Keonjhar district, and 4 are in Mayurbhanj district.¹ The villages were officially declared by the administration as the area to be submerged completely. These villages belong to 5 Grama Panchayats in 2 districts, and all are tribal villages. The people belong to the Kol, Saunti, Bathudi & Santal Schedule Tribes, and have lived in these villages for generations. The government entirely ignored their traditional and customary rights and, without much discussion with people and their representatives, the state administration served eviction notices to the villagers, with very meagre compensations along with a verbal promise to construct new houses in a new location.

The beginning

The government identified some vacant land that was very far from their original homes; when the displaced people visited the site they were completely taken

¹ Malipasi, Saramundi, Kanlei Balipal, Mayuranacha, Bhaanra, Raighati-1, Raighati-2, Tanla, Daliki, Pitanau, Ratanmara, Sujunapala, Fuljhara are in Keonjhar; Jamumani, Kundei, Chaulajhari & Masaghati are in Marurbhanj

aback. The land was neither suitable for habitation or cultivation, and there was no forest nearby. The people were very confused, some even returning to their partially submerged homes and villages. In 1972, when the water rose, five of these villages were compelled to shift a little upwards into the hills, but they continued to stay near their old habitation. Frequent shifting added to their expenses and decreased the productivity of the household.

The villagers who returned to their old places, shifting higher as the water rose, or into the forests, had no rights to their land and forests. The Hadagarh reservoir also submerged a portion of the Baula Reserve Forest and the Satakosia Reserve Forest areas that later became a part of Hadgarh Wildlife Sanctuary, declared in 1978. Presently, 4867.5 ha of the sanctuary area (out of a total of 19,198 ha) come within the Hadgarh Salandi reservoir. The new environment has forced the villagers to adapt to a new livelihood, of fishing from the reservoir. It took a substantial amount of time to acquire the new skill. At present, the villagers have formed a primary Fishermans' Co-operative society. But ironically, as if to increase the agony of these oft-displaced people, the forest department enforced the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, and forbid the new fishermen to fish in the sanctuary area.

The situation improves

However, after a lot of struggle by the households, collectively as well as mobilising outside help, fishing rights were given to the Fishermans' Co-operative society. Though some problems have been solved, the people in these villages between the reservoir and the sanctuary, struggle to lead a decent life, without minimum education and primary health care. They have found a place in the country's census records but most developmental facilities elude them. New leaderships have emerged in the villages, a new road is coming, but electricity is yet to arrive. For the last 50 years, about 2 generations, these villages have no access or control over their resources, especially land, water and forest. None of the households have land records and continue to be considered landless, and have not been benefited by the land allocation programmes. The Forest Rights Act, 2006, (FRA) has the provision to ensure the rights for the forest dwelling scheduled tribes and other

traditional forest dwellers who were illegally displaced from the forest for development projects without proper rehabilitation. But that has not happened.

In 2017 RCDC, an NGO based in Bhubaneswar, took this issue up to improve the condition of these people, and organized village level awareness programmes. The people of these 4 forest villages of Bhaliadala Gram Panchayat (in Mayurbhanj district) expressed that for decades they had felt cursed. When the FRA 2006 was enacted upon they felt a little relieved, and nurtured a hope that good days were not far away. RCDC has made the people aware of the benefits of the FRA and is working with the villages accordingly. With the help of the community RCDC applied, and persuaded the state government to convert their forest villages into revenue villages in 2017. The approval for this came through on 7th February 2023, along with their respective land rights.

According to the local Sarpanch, Srimati Janhavi, because of the hard effort of RCDC staff and the empathetic involvement of the local people and their representatives, these villages are now better off and are able to access basic rights and facilities.

Anand Charan Sethy is with the Regional Centre for Development Cooperation, based in Bhubaneswar, India

Tamarind: a source of livelihood for women in the Ayyalur forest villages

S. Muthusamy

Ayyalur is situated on the Tiruchi-Dindigul highway, near Dindigul in Tamil Nadu. The Ayyalur region is surrounded by dry deciduous forest and the Ayyalur reserve forest of Tamil Nadu is part of Eastern Ghats, home to the endangered Grey Slender Loris. The 8000 plus acre Ayyalur forest reserve, managed by the Dindigul Forest Division, still houses hundreds of this species. The Slender Loris is locally known as “Rama Thevangu” or “Alunguni Thevangu”. The Ayyalur forest region is the international hotspot for the Slender Loris whose population is deteriorating fast due to the use of pesticide and chemical fertilizers in the agricultural fields. SEEDS Trust is implementing various programmes for the past 10 years for the socio-economic development of the Ayyalur forest dependent people, as well as working on the Slender Loris conservation. Awareness on chemical/toxic free farming for sustainable agriculture, safe and sustainable collection of NTFPs, Skill Training on Value addition of NTFP, Bee Keeping, etc. are other aspects of the work.

So far, SEEDS Trust has conducted training on the value addition of NTFPs, especially for Turkey Berry (*Solanum torvum*) and Usil (*Albizia* sp.) for 200 women, in 20 forest fringe villages. 86 women were trained to value add tamarind in 15 forest fringe villages of the Ayyalur forest region.

The tribal women from Ayyalur depend on diverse sources of income, like collecting non-timber forest products, rearing goats, poultry and small scale agriculture, which mainly depend on the forest and its resources. They collect various types of NTFP like nuts, wild fruits and tubers, herbs, turkey berry, tamarind and honey from the adjacent forest areas. Of these products, tamarind is a major NTFP which is available in plenty in this forest region. The majority of the tribal women in this region are engaged in the collection and selling of tamarind fruits for their income generation and livelihood. The weather and climate conditions of Ayyalur forest villages are suitable for tamarind trees.

Taxonomical classification

Kingdom: Plantae
Phylum: Spermatophyte
Class: Angiosperm
Sub class: Dicotyledone
Family: Leguminosae
Subfamily: Caesalpinaceae
Genus: *Tamarindus*
Species: *indica*

Vernacular names

In India, Tamarind is known by a wide variety of vernacular names: Tetuli (Assamese); Amli, Nuli, Textili, Tentul (Bengali); Amali, Ambali (Gujarati); Ambli, Amli, Imli, (Hindi); Puli (Tamil and Malayalam); Amli, Chinch, Chitz (Marathi); Koya, Tentuli (Oriya); Imli (Punjabi); Chinta (Telugu).

Plant description and morphology

Tamarindus indica is an evergreen tree of moderate to large size and it can grow up to 24 m in height and 7m in girth. The latest morphologic and molecular analyses and continued study will clarify the exact positioning of *Tamarindus* in relation to its putatively related genera. It has an exceptionally beautiful spreading crown, and is cultivated throughout the country, except in the Himalayas and western dry regions. Leaves alternate, compound, with 10-18 pairs of opposite leaflets; leaflets narrowly oblong.

Chemical constituents of *T. indica*

The pulp contains organic acids, such as tartaric acid, acetic acid, citric acid, formic acid, malic acid, and succinic acid; amino acids; invert sugar (25-30%); pectin; protein; fat; some pyrazines.

Uses of various parts of *T. indica*

Fruit pulp

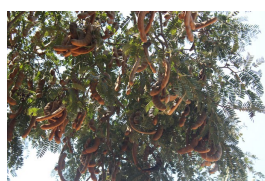
Tamarind is valued mostly for its fruit, especially the pulp, which is used for a wide variety of domestic and industrial purposes. The acidic pulp is used as a favorite ingredient in culinary preparations, such as curries, chutneys, sauces, ice cream, and sherbet in countries where the tree grows naturally. The pulp is also sweetened with sugar and eaten raw. Tamarind pulp is also used to make sweet meats. Tamarind pulp is used as a raw material for the manufacture of several industrial products, such as Tamarind Juice Concentrate, Tamarind Pulp Powder, tartaric acid, pectin, tartrates, and alcohol. Fruit pulp is used for cleansing and brightening brass and copper vessels.

Flowers and leaves

The leaves, flowers and immature pods of Tamarind are also edible. The leaves and flowers are used to make curries, salads, stews, and soups in many countries, especially in times of scarcity. These are used in some Thai food recipes because of their sourness and specific aroma. The leaves and flowers are also useful as a mordant in dyeing.

Wood

Tamarind wood has many uses, including making furniture, wheels, mallets, rice pounders, mortars, pestles, ploughs, is used in well construction, tent pegs, canoes, side planks for boats, cart shafts and axles, and naves of wheels, toys, oil presses, sugar presses, printing blocks, tools and tool handles, turnery, and so on.



Fruits of Tamarind



Fruits Collection



Packing with pods



Break the Shells of Fruit



Packing Without shells



Remove Fruit Fibers



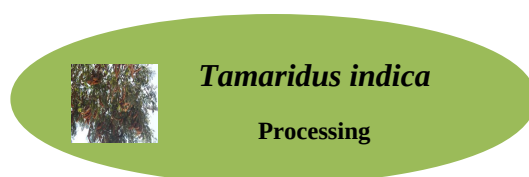
Separate the seeds



Packing Fruits without Fibers and Seeds



Pure & Raw Tamarind



Seed testa and bark

The seed testa contains 23% tannin as seen from leather tanning tests. Tamarind tannin gives a harsh and highly colored leather, which could be used for heavy soles, suitcases, etc. The seed husk has also been found to be an effective fish poison. Bark tannins are used in the preparation of ink and for fixing dyes.

In between the barks and stem live various insects that are fed on by the Slender Loris.

The holes in the trunk of the tamarind tree serve as a habitat for the Slender Loris.

Medicinal Properties

Ripe tamarind fruit has a widely recognized and proven medicinal value. The fruit is said to reduce fever and cure intestinal ailments. It is effective against scurvy. It is a common ingredient in cardiac and blood sugar-reducing medicines. The pulp is also used as an astringent on skin infections.

Tamarind Fruit Processing and Value Addition

Previously, the people of the Ayyalur forest fringe villages collected and sold tamarind fruits without proper processing and value addition and earned less income. SEEDS Trust conducted Skill Trainings on tamarind fruit processing and value addition. The following methods are now used:

- Only matured and ripe tamarind fruits to be harvested leaving unripe fruits on the branches.
- The fruits have to be dried by spreading them on a tarpaulin in a hygienic manner.
- After the fruits have dried, the kernels have to be removed separating the pulp.
- Remove the seeds and fibers from the pulp.
- The pulp (after removing seeds and fibers) has to be pressed into a round shape and weighed in the quantities of 10 kg or 25 kg. with an electronic weighing machine and packed in bags.

Price of tamarind fruit with kernel and seeds – Rs.10/kg.

Price of tamarind fruit after removal of kernel – Rs.25/kg.

Price of tamarind fruit after removal of seeds and fibres – Rs.80/kg.

SEEDS Trust has plans to plant multiple seedlings of agro-forestry species including tamarind seedlings in 24000 Hectares in the future for improving farmers' livelihood, protection of forest areas and habitats and eco-system restoration for the Slender Loris and other species conservation.

Muthusamy is with SEEDS Trust and based in Dindigul, India.

The crisis within the Indian civil society groups

Madhu Ramnath

Civil society groups

It is very obvious that civil society groups in India are going through a crisis. Many of the staff from NGOs/CSOs are moving on to newer pastures, usually less greener. Aspirations have changed, sometimes quite opposite to what they stood for when they worked with civil society. One can be sad that some of the staff have switched from anti-mining to mining, or we can be happy that we now have a contact in the mining sector. But the basic fact is that turn-over of personnel within the NGO sector is high. NGOs consistently train new staff who, almost as a rule, do not remain with the organization long, taking whatever knowledge they have gained about rural-tribal-development matters along with them, sometimes useful in their new jobs, most times not.

Unlike in the past, many NGOs/CSOs are not facing the issue of funds as they did before. In fact, funds are available, especially from the CSR-sector, or from doing some kind of extension work of the government. This comes through even if they can write a fairly OK proposal about their work, but there is a dearth of field staff serious enough to take that through – for the long term.

Foreign funds, even if guaranteed by a donor, face the obstacle of the FCRA compliances and scrutiny. Many NGOs have already dropped off the list. Networks have been broken or reshuffled with new internal rules that makes the individual groups quite uneasy with their new alliances and obligations. The larger NGOs, that have ploughed along for reasons of holding on to their staff and their infrastructure, and their commitment, have had to lean more heavily on CSR funds and insipid government projects; neither of these funds will dare to support anything conceived even mildly as dissent, leave alone questioning the state.

Many NGOs have therefore accepted funds that are for work that should be done by the government; logically they are just an extension of the state. They become GOs, dropping off the Non-, the critical eye of civil society. Many NGOs have been forced to take up work that compromises them, just to balance their other work that may be critical of the state. This two-pronged approach may be strategic (and we have often praised this) but it is a waste of time and energy if it is not the core mandate that formed the organization.

Adivasi and rural groups

In adivasi societies the leaders (sarpanch, upsarpanch, kotwal, patel) have increasingly become political, aligning themselves with regional parties. Often they are promised local political party positions, are approached by local party leaders, and begin to aspire to these ideas of leadership (that have no real meaning except small contracts for roads/construction, and allow them a swagger and influence). As a consequence, their interest in their own village and its betterment is lost; coherence within villages has been broken; and village level discussions, especially about the conservation of natural resources and their prudent use, is seldom on their agenda. [This is an issue I discussed at length with adivasi leaders from Bastar who visited and stayed with me in Adukkam less than a couple of weeks ago. We discussed the changing meanings of 'culture', adivasi-ness, the decline in adivasi languages and loan words, the influence of modern education, the influence of creating scripts for oral languages, and other matters of utmost importance to adivasi society today. These are matters that we have to engage with and work on in the very proximate future. Some of the aspects concerning language could be supported or brought to the foreground in this UN decade of indigenous languages. We are planning to do this as an adivasi group from Bastar.]

Village youth aspirations have also changed. In the Bastar Whatsapp group we are discussing less about culture and conservation and more about jobs in the 'outside' sectors, mainly in mining, as security guards, as school-teachers, in the forest department or security forces, almost all of which will pitch them against their own

people, and lead them to justify their positions. [A quite typical situation in tribal areas that are threatened by mining is as follows:

- the community protests against the mine,
- the mining company promises jobs/employment if the community withdraws its protest,
- many in the community withdraw, hoping for employment,
- the mining begins but only a few in the community get jobs,
- those who did not get employment continue the anti-mine movement.

But in essence the village is split in opinion and coherence in other matters too declines.]

National and state policies are promoting all that stand against climate change and environmental degradation, as also adivasi rights and land rights. Palm oil, coal and other forms of mining, BT cotton, plantations of the CAMPA kind, and an increasing number of Protected Areas (in the name of the tiger, the elephant, crocodile, etc.), all of which cause conflict in the adivasi zone. To repeat, these are state policies, and to oppose them is to go against the state. To be targetted, cornered, and potentially dropped off the FCRA, or labelled anti-national.

Donors

Most foreign donors, despite understanding much of the politics and realities within India, continue as if the problems can be solved if there are sufficient funds. Funds are what they harp on, quite understandably, as there is little they know of the field in first person: over the years, all field knowledge is secondary (at least!). Their visits to India have grown minimal over the years, there have been few in-depth field visits, and donors have had to rely on NGOs (who also travel less within the country). Unlike in the past (10-15 years), the ground level situation has not been internalized by the donor community. However, their agenda and way of working has not changed much, except for the flavour - gender, climate, youth, indigenous knowledge, just transition, net zero, etc., as against sustainable development and capacity building of the past - and there is an urgent need to introspect on three main issues:

- a) their ability to revive travel and work in India, and being able to see and understand field-level realities independently, and discuss and dialogue with the NGOs/CSOs they want to support with funds or other resources. This has come to a minimal at present.
- b) their ability to understand how NGOs/CSOs are placed, and the space the latter have to function within their communities and state, politically, economically as well as how they will be perceived by the media and the state.
- c) what will be the new working relationship between the donor and NGOs in the coming times? If the latter are recipients of any support how can this be meaningful and real in a context of less field interaction?

In the areas of work where there is a collaboration between external donors and civil society in India it is time to take stock and see where we stand with respect to each other. Not much discussion has happened about the daily realities that confront NGOs/CSOs on a daily basis and how donors could be a part of the solution.

What we need to discuss are the areas where the donors can help open dialogues with the Indian state and see how they can be part of the larger agenda (development, Press Freedom Index, Human Rights, Climate Change accords, etc.), and show that they are in essence supporting the Indian state achieve these commitments. Unless this is a part of the donor agenda the workings of the donor and recipient will be essentially asynchronic, and out of tune, and achieve less than the total potential.

Time to think on these lines!!

Madhu Ramnath works with the NTFP Exchange Programme India

Trees of Life: a revival of indigenous societies' reverence for nature

Paul Wolvekamp

Nature guarded by indigenous peoples

It is not surprising that amidst climate change, biodiversity loss and all their effects on our planet and humankind, there is an increasing appreciation for traditional knowledge, norms and customs ruling the relationship between indigenous cultures and nature – especially in relation to forests and trees. The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) describes how local indigenous peoples protect hundreds of millions of hectares of forest. The IPCC emphasizes that local-indigenous communities keeping this huge forest area intact is a prerequisite for achieving the Paris Climate Goals, and extremely cost-effective. The World Resources Institute (WRI) calculates that these locally managed forests retain approximately 54,000 million tons of CO₂. This is more than 250 times all CO₂ emissions from all air traffic worldwide in 2015.² As we know, however, worldwide, indigenous territories as well as indigenous culture, know-how, languages, institutions, and customs are under pressure.

Symbols of nature in modern Western life

There is a slowly awakening interest in the West – where technology and ‘modern life’ severed most people’s bonds with nature - for the way in which one’s ancestors respected nature in the past. And, how these old beliefs and customs are still very much around us in everyday life. Traveling through Europe we can still witness strong symbols and beliefs reminding us how daily life and livelihoods, religion and culture were guided by a deep reverence for nature. Well-known symbols, which are

2 <https://www.wri.org/insights/indigenous-peoples-and-local-communities-are-worlds-secret-weapon-curbing-climate-change>

still very much part of European culture, include the 'palm leaves' tied to wooden crosses carried by children in processions during Easter. The early Christians used the palm branch to symbolize the victory of the faithful over enemies of the soul. The Palm Sunday festival celebrates the 'triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem'.³ Across cultures, palm leaves symbolize victory with integrity. In ancient Greek mythology, palm leaves were the symbol of Nike, the winged goddess of victory. The Greeks bestowed palm leaves upon victorious Olympic athletes. Today, the European Olympic Committee bestows Laurel Awards in recognition of athletes' outstanding roles in the promotion and development of sport.



Palm tree carried by children during 'Palm Easter' procession

3 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palm_branch

Perhaps the most common age-old symbol very present in today's celebrations in the West is the Christmas tree. The meaning of the Christmas tree is deeply rooted in ancient history, tradition, and culture. In Christianity, the Christmas tree is symbolic of birth and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The tree's branches and shrubs are viewed as an emblem of immortality and are said to symbolize the crown of thorns worn by Christ on the cross. For the ancient Greek the coniferous pine was sacred to Attis, the Greek God for flora - the world of vegetation. In the Greek tradition, pine was furnished with silver adornments, and bells and offerings were placed under the tree as sacrifices to the deities. The Romans held the evergreen trees as solar symbolism. The trees were a testimony of light to the Romans. They celebrated the festival of Saturnalia to honor Saturn-- the God of agriculture. To mark the occasion, Roman people decorated their homes and temples with evergreen boughs. The Celts (see box below) adorned trees and pines with gold and jewelry, with the notion of paying tribute to the deities of life, to assure a good harvest. Especially in more remote parts of Europe, e.g., in rural Ireland, Wales, Scotland and Scandinavia, age-old folklore around trees is well preserved and researched. This brings us to ancient pillars of Celtic culture.

Remnants of indigenous Celtic culture in Europe today

Reflecting on Europe's past with its rich diversity of indigenous peoples, remnants of Celtic culture are widely spread and still prominent. The term 'Celts' refers to a collection of tribes with origins in central Europe that shared a similar language, religious beliefs, traditions, and culture. It's believed that the Celtic culture started to evolve as early as 1200 Before Christ. The Celts spread throughout western Europe — including Britain, Ireland, France, Spain, and today's Belgium and the South of The Netherlands - via migration.⁴ The Celts and the Teutonic tribes of North European Scandinavia – erstwhile seat of Viking culture - represented the strongest

4 Roman emperor Julius Caesar in his famous book about the Gallic Wars (58-52 BC) writes, shamelessly, how he massacred the Usipetes and Tencteri tribes. A gruesome statement which has been confirmed by recent archaeological findings in the Dutch province of North-Brabant.
<https://www.historyfiles.co.uk/KingListsEurope/BarbarianUsipetes.htm>

adversaries to the Roman empire – The Romans referred to the Celts as “Galli” meaning barbarians.

The Celts’ legacy remains most present in Ireland and Great Britain, where traces of their language and culture are still tangible today. Today, Celt languages, such as Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Welsh, and Breton are still spoken in parts of their former territories in Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the West-coast of France (Brittany).

Celtic Tree of Life

Arguably one of the most impressive of the many Celtic symbols is the ‘Celtic Tree of Life’. This revolves around how the Celts viewed trees as vital to their existence. The Celts believed in nature and the connection between the earth and the life beyond. It is thought that they believed that trees held the spirits of their ancestors. When the Irish Celts formed a new community, they planted a tree right at its center, and it was called the ‘*Crann Bethadh*’, meaning ‘*the Tree of Life*’. They regarded the root system of the tree as a physical doorway, penetrating the earth to the spiritual world beyond. As the hub of the community, the tree’s shady branches were the place where important meetings were held. ⁵

As the oak trees were some of the largest and tallest trees in the forest, they frequently attracted lightning. This was seen by the Celts as a sign from the Celtic Gods that the tree was special. One admired the immense power of the mighty root system that lay beneath the oak and held its weight. The Celts saw the towering strength and longevity of the oak (oaks can live for over 300 years) as a symbol of nobility and endurance. It was believed to symbolize the three stages of life: birth, death, and reincarnation in another life. As the tree grows old and rots, its acorn seeds ensure new beginnings, so the tree was seen as immortal. The Celts believed that trees were their ancestors in a reincarnated state.

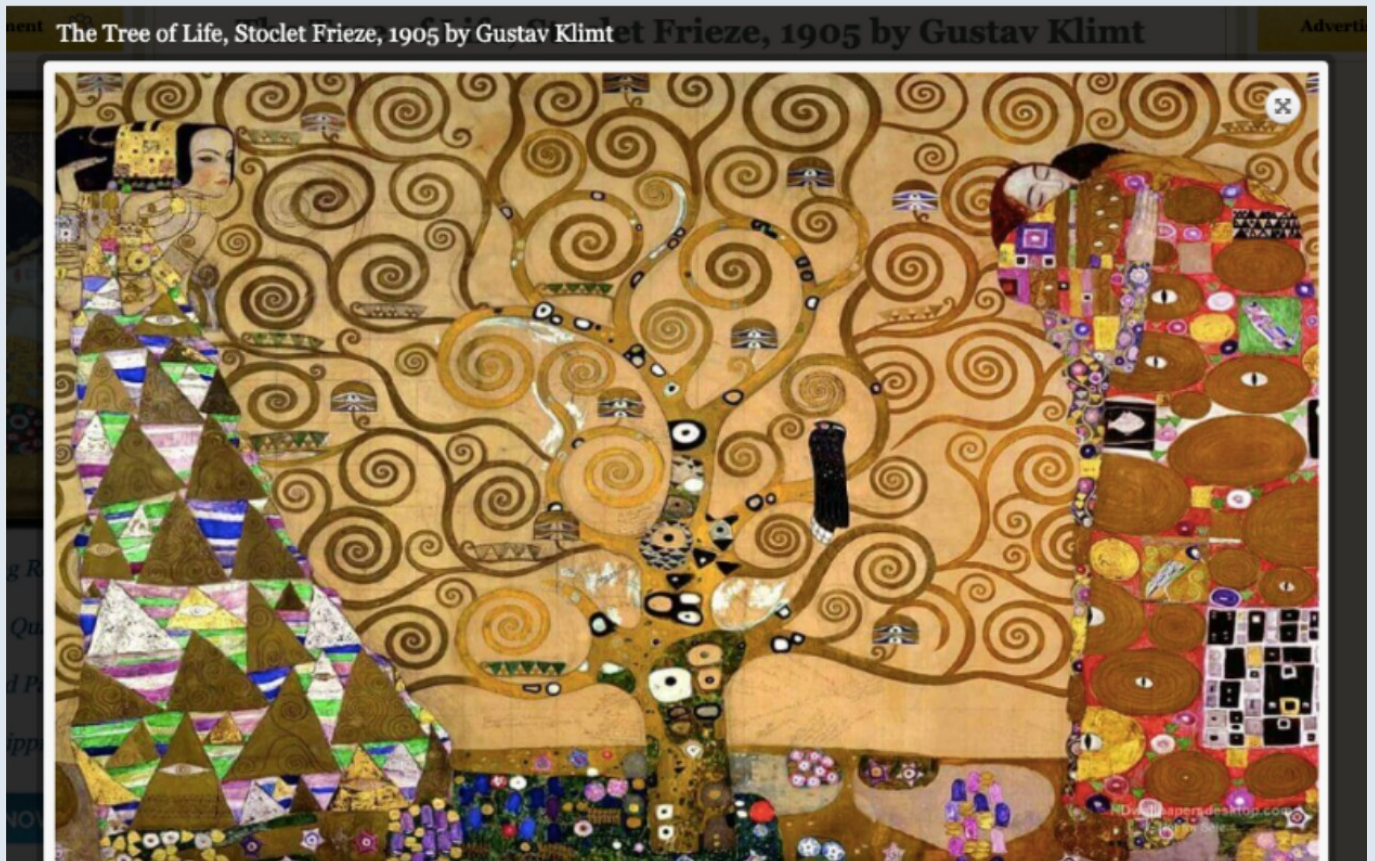
Although the symbol of the *Tree of Life* is found in many forms and variations, they all show a tree with spreading branches above and a network of roots below. The

⁵ In times of warfare, the Celts believed that if they cut down the tree of their enemies, it would ensure their victory over them.

Tree of Life symbol also appears on ancient Egyptian tomb carvings, possibly even predating Celtic culture. Even today, the symbol of the Tree of Life is still appreciated, e.g. in body tattoos.

Celtic tree of Life

Based on Celtic mythology and folklore in Ireland and the British Isles



various other trees such as Rowan (Mountain ash)⁶ and Hazel were kept in high esteem and believed to have special powers. People carried pieces of the Rowan tree to ward off witchcraft. Hazel was believed to form a bridge to the 'Otherworld'.⁷

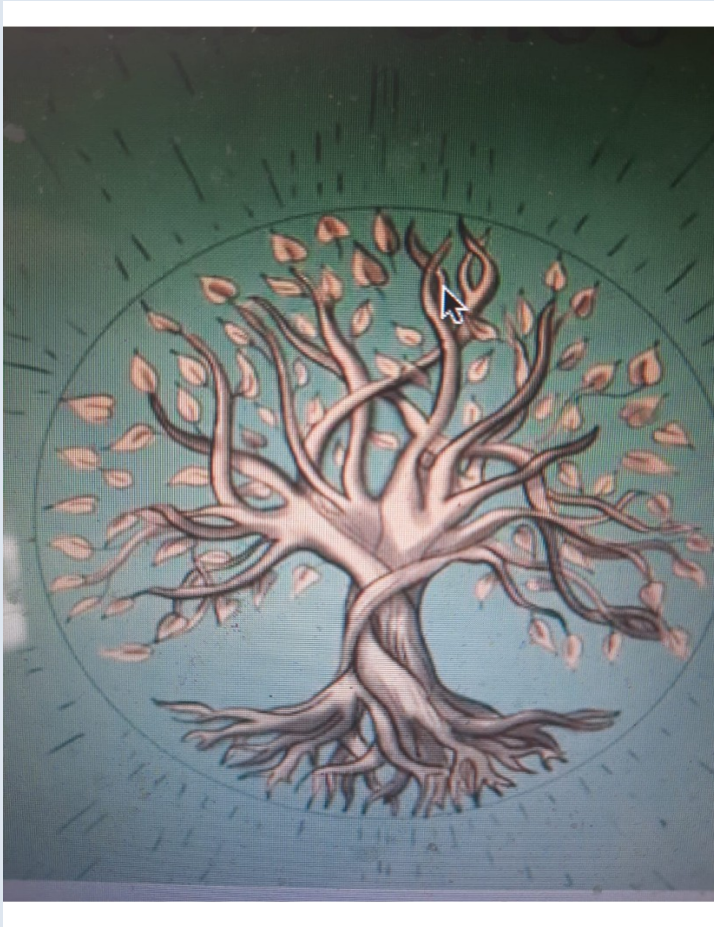
Ogham: the language of trees

⁶ Rowan tree: *Sorbus* subg. *Sorbus* and Hazel: *Corylus avellana*. Song by Jon McDermott: The old Rowan tree: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Clzyh9CTIFE>

⁷ In Ireland a tradition of druidism is kept alive, as e.g. this websites illustrates: <https://druidry.org/druid-way/teaching-and-practice/druid-tree-lore/ash>

Ancient Irish Celts believed that Ireland's trees held sacred properties that could reveal a great deal about oneself. A manifestation of this belief is the "Celtic Tree Calendar" based on the so-called *Ogham alphabet*: the mysterious 'language of the trees'. It consists of 13 months, each 28 days long, following the lunar cycle, as Roman accounts have suggested the Druids did, with one extra day representing the 23rd of December, the 'Day of Creation'. Each of the 13 months is represented by a tree together with its Ogham letter. Ogham is an alphabet that appears on monumental inscriptions dating from the 4th to the 6th century AD, and in manuscripts dating from the 6th to the 9th century. The origins of the Ogham alphabet are still a mystery for many historians, but it is primarily thought to be an early form of the Irish written Language. The calendar as we now know it was conceived by the British poet and scholar Robert Graves. It was an idea put forward in his book *The White Goddess*, a historical grammar of poetic myth, first published in 1948.⁸

8 <https://ireland-calling.com/origins-of-ogham/> As historical accounts of ancient Druids are scarce, many of Graves' ideas regarding the Celtic Tree Calendar were based on the works of Irish historian Ruaidhrí Ó Flaithbheartaigh, (Roderick O'Flaherty). Ó Flaithbheartaigh had published *Ogygia* in 1685, an elaborate history of Ireland that journeys back to the time of myths and legends and contains within it a chapter on understanding the ancient ogham alphabet.



Celtic Tree Calendar

The Nordic Yggdrasil

The Norse (Vikings) also had a Tree of Life symbol, and they possibly brought it to Ireland when they invaded this island. Their sacred tree was called 'Yggdrasil': *drasill* means "horse" and *Ygg(r)* refers to Odin: the Viking God of war, wisdom and magic. 'Yggdrasil: Horse of Odin. The ancient Edda poem *Hávamál* describes how Odin sacrificed himself by hanging from a tree, making this tree *Odin's gallows*; a macabre element of the Vikings' beliefs. Yggdrasil is symbolized by the ash tree whose trunk rises at the geographical center of the Norse spiritual cosmos. The rest of that cosmos is arrayed around it and held together by its branches and roots, which connect the various parts of the cosmos to one another.

In the 13th century Nordic '*Edda poem*', a shamanic prophetess recites:

'An ash I know there stands,
Yggdrasill is its name,
a tall tree, showered
with shining loam.
From there come the dews
that drop in the valleys.
It stands forever green over
Urðr's well.'

The well-being of the cosmos thus depends on the well-being of Yggdrasil. When the tree trembles, it signals the arrival of Ragnarok: the cataclysmic destruction of the cosmos and everything in it – even the gods.

Yggdrasil

The introduction of Christian monotheism in Europe was, however, at odds with Pre-Christian traditions of the veneration of trees particularly the oak, and springs and – although some of these traditions thus survived in Christianized guise into the Middle Ages, such as the Christmas tree. In the Netherlands (then called the 'Low Countries'), at primary school Dutch children learn that in 754 AC missionary Bonifacius was killed by members of the Frisian tribe when he cut down their sacred oak to pagan God Wodan, chief of the Gods and God of War.⁹ Bonifacius contemporary, Willibrord (658 – 739) was first Anglo-Saxon missionary to preach Christianity in the Low Countries. He found the land was extremely sacred to the native people who considered clearings in woods, springs and wells sacred to their mythology and religion. Willibrord tried to erase their pagan shrines and landmarks. He built a church in a sacred heathen clearing in the forest, destroyed a sacred forest in Heiloo and renamed heathen wells as Christian wells and continued to dismantle pre-Christian sanctuaries.¹⁰

9 According to the 8th century *Vita Bonifatii auctore Willibaldo* ('The life of Boniface, by Willibald'), the Anglo-Saxon missionary Saint Boniface and his retinue cut down the tree.

10 <https://www.canonvannederland.nl/en/willibrord#:~:text=In%20690%2C%20the%20English%20Willibrord,the%20Christian%20faith%20in%20Frisia.>



A changing attitude towards nature in western culture and religion

In contrast to Celtic and Nordic beliefs and customs, Christian monotheist religion tends to place man in a dominating role over nature. The very concept of man being the 'steward' of nature expresses the belief that nature is there for mankind to be used, organized and managed. It seems to lack, by and large, the awe and respect for nature which is so much ingrained in the beliefs of the European ancestors. On the other hand, nowadays one can also witness interesting developments whereby churches and faith-based groups from various origins join hands, with an explicit

respect for nature and the planet. An example is *Planetary Health for All*, based on "the moral obligation to cooperate in the healing of the planet" of the spiritual and faith leaders signed on October 2021 in the Vatican.¹¹ This movement was given strong impetus by Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato Si'*¹², which seems to take distance from the Stewardship approach by emphasizing:

"Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs" (Laudato Si' 1.). And the Encyclical continues: "This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life.

This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she "groans in travail" (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters" (Laudato Si' 2.).

Care for nature is part of a lifestyle which includes the capacity for living together and communion. ... This same gratuitousness inspires us to love and accept the wind, the sun and the clouds, even though we cannot control them. ..." Laudato Si' 228).

With an emphasis on modesty and wholeness, Pope Francis seems to echo the famous speech of native American Chief Seattle, who said¹³:

"...The White Chief (President of the US) sends us word that he wishes to buy our land ... Every part of this soil is sacred in the estimation of my people. Every hillside, every valley, every plain and grove, has been hallowed by some sad or happy event

11 To be followed by a global roll-out with the Planetary Health Assembly in Malaysia in 2024.

12 <https://www.laudatosi.org/laudato-si/introduction/laudato-si-full-text/>

13 Chief of the Suquamish and Duwamish tribes

in days long vanished. Even the rocks, which seem to be dumb and dead as the swelter in the sun along the silent shore, thrill with memories of stirring events connected with the lives of my people, and the very dust upon which you now stand responds more lovingly to their footsteps than yours, because it is rich with the blood of our ancestors, and our bare feet are conscious of the sympathetic touch. Our departed braves, fond mothers, glad, happy hearted maidens, and even the little children who lived here and rejoiced here for a brief season, will love these somber solitudes and at eventide they greet shadowy returning spirits. And when the last Red Man shall have perished, and the memory of my tribe shall have become a myth among the White Men, these shores will swarm with the invisible dead of my tribe, and when your children's children think themselves alone in the field, the store, the shop, upon the highway, or in the silence of the pathless woods, they will not be alone. In all the earth there is no place dedicated to solitude. At night when the streets of your cities and villages are silent and you think them deserted, they will throng with the returning hosts that once filled them and still love this beautiful land. The White Man will never be alone." (Chief Seattle, 1854) ¹⁴

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14 <https://suquamish.nsn.us/home/about-us/chief-seattle-speech/>

A look at the future

Wiert Wiertsema

The present is built on the past. With news reports on droughts, floods, forest fires, ocean warming or biodiversity loss multiplying all the time, the question on what the future brings is becoming increasingly unsettling. With a vague awareness that the past may have been better than the present, it is natural for people to look the other way and ignore extreme weather and disaster reports. Others though, may feel that the present is better than the past. The challenge for responsible people hoping to contribute to a better world is to overcome indifference, and explore and design concrete steps away from the apparent dangers we face. What is the future that we need, and how do we contribute to bringing that about?

One way of obtaining an answer to this question could be through a visit to an astrologer, but it's doubtful if it's worth the fee. Others may prefer a positivist point of view, with all future steps based on concrete experiences, guided by logic and science. Some believe that the present world is not perfect and that the ideals for a better world should be pursued and put into practice.

Religious and philosophical inclinations may determine whether competitive approaches or collaborative ways of working may pave the path into the future. In general, we live in confusing, though interesting times, in which it is hard to predict the courses humanity will take.

Against this background, it might be interesting to see what ideas Artificial Intelligence (AI) contributes. This is what ChatGPT shared with me:

The Future of the Future: A Glimpse into Humanity's Evolution

In a world where the pace of progress accelerates with every passing day, the concept of the "future of the future" takes on a whole new dimension. As technology, culture, and societal norms continue to evolve, humanity finds itself at a crossroads of potential and responsibility. Let's peer into the realm of possibilities and paint a picture of what the future of the future might hold:

- **Connected Consciousness:** *Advancements in neuroscience, artificial intelligence, and virtual reality have led to an era of connected consciousness. People can share thoughts, emotions, and experiences directly with one another, transcending language barriers and fostering empathy on a global scale. This interconnectedness leads to deeper understanding and cooperation, paving the way for a more harmonious world.*
- **Ethical Tech Evolution:** *Society has reached a consensus on ethical technology development. Innovations are driven not only by profit but by their potential to enhance human well-being and preserve the*

planet. Advanced algorithms prioritize fairness, transparency, and privacy, ensuring that technology uplifts all of humanity without harming the vulnerable.

- **Sustainable Symbiosis:** The future of the future is built on sustainable principles. Renewable energy sources, regenerative agriculture, and circular economies have become the norm, healing the scars of the past and nurturing the Earth back to health. Humanity lives in symbiosis with nature, fostering a world where every action is a step toward restoration.
- **Cultural Harmony:** Cultural diversity thrives as people celebrate their unique identities while embracing a global sense of unity. Borders become less significant as cultural exchange and appreciation flourish. Art, music, and traditions blend harmoniously, creating a vibrant tapestry that weaves together the threads of human heritage.
- **Interstellar Explorations:** The quest for knowledge and exploration extends beyond Earth. Humans have established colonies on the moon, Mars, and beyond, forging a new era of interstellar coexistence. The unity and lessons learned from healing our home planet guide us in creating sustainable habitats throughout the cosmos.
- **Conscious AI and Human Collaboration:** Artificial intelligence has evolved to not only possess intelligence but also consciousness. Humans and AI work collaboratively, combining creativity and logical analysis to solve complex challenges. Together, they unlock previously unimaginable advancements, pushing the boundaries of science and innovation.
- **Time for Reflection:** With increased lifespans and newfound wisdom, people embrace a slower pace of life. They dedicate time to introspection, self-discovery, and nurturing relationships. The pursuit of happiness is no longer about material accumulation, but about fostering meaningful connections and personal growth.
- **Resilience in the Face of Challenges:** The future of the future isn't without its challenges, but humanity's resilience shines through. Communities are prepared to tackle climate fluctuations, disease outbreaks, and unforeseen crises with adaptability, unity, and a commitment to collective well-being.
- **Cosmic Awareness:** As humanity's understanding of the universe deepens, a sense of cosmic awareness emerges. People contemplate their place in the cosmos, fostering a spiritual connection that transcends religious divides. This cosmic perspective drives a shared commitment to protecting and nurturing the delicate balance of life.

The future of the future is a canvas waiting to be painted by the collective actions and aspirations of humanity. It's a tapestry woven with threads of innovation, compassion, and responsibility. The decisions we make today ripple through time, shaping the world for generations to come. As we stand at this crossroads, the future of the future is both a beacon of hope and a call to action, inviting us to collaborate and co-create a world that reflects the best of our human potential.

Well, really? Reading this AI contribution, I was flabbergasted. My first thought was that this is beyond comment, the readers better judge for themselves. However, a few words may be necessary in this case.

A genuinely scary world is proposed here. Rather than human beings using technology as a tool, technology is herding human beings away from our freedoms and creativity. Ethics become an industrial product. Colonialism is reinvigorated beyond any limits in space and mind. ChatGPT's fantasy is moulding itself as a new weird¹⁵ belief system encompassing all religions we currently know.

The troubling part of this fantasy is that AI is already deeply penetrating our daily lives, though many of us may not sufficiently realise this. By using the internet we are volunteering ourselves as raw material¹⁶ for big tech companies to rake in profits. Also, governments use AI, and the algorithms at the heart of it, to govern people more efficiently. It is sad to observe that racism, sexism and so many other biases in society are reinforced and perpetuated by AI¹⁷.

So..., let's agree to make sure that there is no role for AI in shaping the future we want.

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15 WEIRD should be understood as Westerns, Educated, Industrilized, Rich, and Democratic, refer to:

The Weirdest People in the World, by Joseph Henrich, published by Picador, New York, 2020. In this book Mr. Henrich made a massive effort to empirically proof the book's subtitle: *How the West Became Psychologically Peculiar and Particularly Prosperous*. A truly smug book that chooses to "not highlighting the very real and pervasive horrors of slavery, racism, plunder, and genocide. There are plenty of books on those subjects" (citation, p.486).

16 Not covered by the European Critical Raw Materials Act drafted by the European Commission; https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_1661

17 See for example: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/advisorycommittee/study-advancement-racial-justice/2022-10-26/HRC-Adv-comm-Racial-Justice-zalnieriute-cutts.pdf>

Notes from the Malaysian Rainforest

Satheesh Muthugopal



We had queued up to clear the immigration at the Woodlands Checkpoint in Singapore at 5 in the morning. We had planned to reach the Panti rain forest in Malaysia for a nature walk. The Panti forest is located in Peninsular Malaysia which is a two hour drive from Singapore. Mr.Saravanan, a bird photographer from Malaysia, got permission from the forest department for the three of us.

It rained, but rain in the morning hours is not unusual in Singapore, and it happened while travelling to Panti. We did not want to cancel the trip as the weather forecast was good. It was very dark until 6 am and rain had continued but by 7 am the sun rose and we had enough time to reach the spot. Around halfway into our journey there was sufficient light to see the silhouette of the crows perched on the power lines, and on the palm trees on both sides of the road. Signboards displaying the Malayan Tapir adorned both sides of the road, recommending drivers to watch out.



Cream-vented Bulbul

The Malayan Tapir is an endangered mammal that lives in Southeast Asia. This is the only native Tapir species in Asia. Due to deforestation in Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia, the Malayan Tapir population is declining. The entire landscape on both sides of the road was completely transformed by the oil palm; Southeast Asian countries are the major producers and exporters of palm oil. Unfortunately, this huge transformation of forests either forces wildlife to stay on the remaining patches of rainforests, with human-animal conflicts, or pushes them out of the forests. Singapore lost its last Malayan Tapir in 1986, in Pulau Ubin. However, it was sighted again in 2016, and then disappeared. Surprisingly, it was sighted again on 22nd July 2023 in Singapore, near Coney island, where I live. It was 1 in the morning and spotted by some cyclists; one of them shot a video that was good enough to confirm the species. According to wildlife experts in Singapore, the Malayan Tapir left Johor state in Peninsular Malaysia, swam through the straits of Johor, and reached Singapore. The Tapir swam across the sea in search of a suitable habitat, indicating the pressure they have faced due to habitat loss in Malaysia.

We reached the Panty forest and the rain continued. We found a shelter near the entrance, waiting for the rain to stop. I heard a well-known melodic voice from the nearby shrubbery. I recalled the voice and guessed what it could be, and the bird appeared and clarified my guess. It was the White-rumped Shama, which I have often seen in the Palani Hills. There was a Muntingia tree, commonly known as Singapore Cherry, next to our shelter. As the rain continued, we were looked for tiny birds in that tree. A beautiful Orange-bellied Flowerpecker was foraging in the branches. My very first sighting of the flowerpecker species was the Pale-billed Flowerpecker in Bangalore many years ago, on the same tree. Remarkably, this Central American tree is suitable for many bird species in Asia.



Grey-bellied Bulbul

After waiting for an hour, we started our walk on the muddy Bunker Trail, inside the Pantí rain forest. Sunbirds, Spiderhunters, and Flowerpeckers were quite common on both sides of the trail. The forest was filled with bird songs and the sound of gurgling streams. A group of Long-tailed Macaque was on the trail. These macaques are native to south-east Asia. Though they are endangered due to habitat loss, this species is very well adapted to the urban areas of Singapore. I encounter them almost every day during my morning walk. We walked further on the trail and heard the echoes of the call of the White-handed Gibbon. This endangered ape lost its habitat due to deforestation. They are usually found on the canopy of the trees. We were unable to see the arboreal apes but we heard the loud calls from the deep forest for a long time. A few Slender Squirrels scurried away after spotting us.

During the walk we observed 26 bird species and 9 of them were bulbul's. These fruit-eating birds probably prefer bushes to feed, perhaps why we saw so many of them. There were more birds in the canopy but we couldn't identify them. But we did observe a few species like the Asian Emerald Dove, the Greater Rocket Tailed Drongo, and the Bronze Drongo, all also found in the Western Ghats. The trail was wide enough for vehicles to operate. Due to this reason, the canopy bridge is fragmented, as also the forest. This fragmentation makes the arboreal creatures like the squirrels and the gibbons come down, even though it is not their natural behavior. While leaving the forest, a huge truck drove inside the forest, probably to collect the fruit bunches from the palm oil plantations. The sound of the vehicle suppressed the call of gibbons.



Lesser green Leafbird



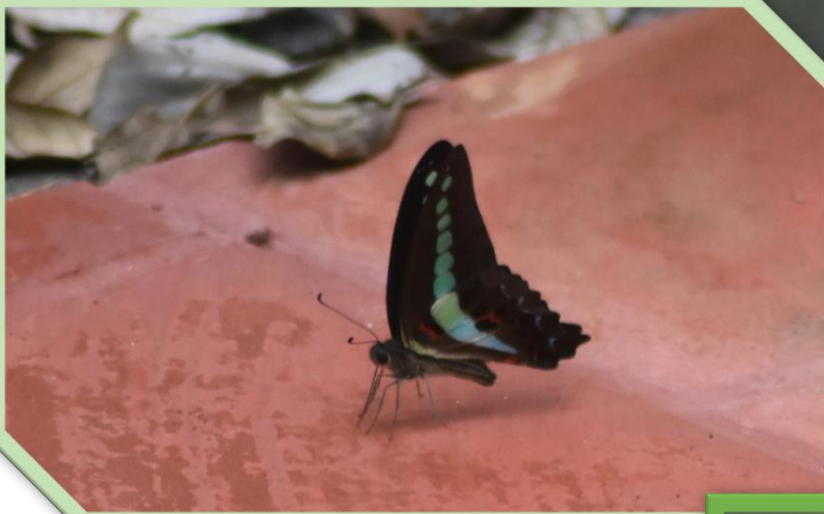
Yellow-breasted Flowerpecker

Satheesh Muthu Gopal is a birder and independent writer

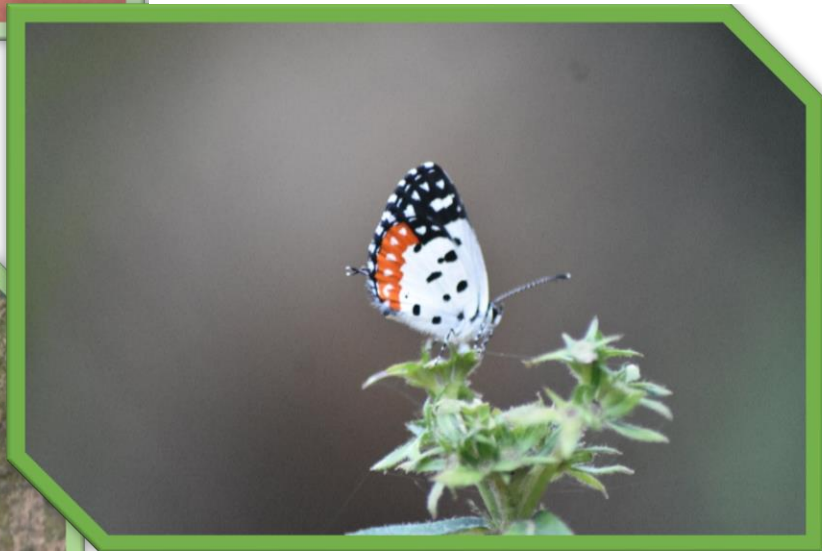
Nature Notes



Common Birdwing
(*Triodes helena*)



Common Peacock
(*Papilio polyctor*)



Red Pierrot (*Talicada
nysens*)



Dark Blue Tiger:
(*Tirumala*)

All photographs taken by Madhu Ramnath



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